An unexpected deviation

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An unexpected deviation

by BumblebeesAndDandelions

Summary

Hannibal prided himself on being meticulous, especially in his hunts. Surprises could get him caught or killed, and he tried to keep them as rare as possible. So finding one of his victims in the middle of beating a man tied up in his basement was certainly unexpected.

Notes

June 5 - | Handcuffs |

See the end of the work for more notes

Hannibal prided himself on being meticulous, especially in his hunts. Preparation and careful adherence to his rules were the reason he was still free. They were also the reason Andrew Phalkins was dying tonight. He had been unconscionably rude, backing his car straight into Hannibal's, denting it, and then driving away. That he had done it nearly two years ago, at this point, was of no bearing on Hannibal.

Surprises, therefore, were rare. Occasionally, his victim had someone with them, and Hannibal had to decide whether he'd reschedule, or kill them both. Or they'd go on a spontaneous trip, out of Hannibal's reach. They could die unexpectedly. However, he'd never found one of his victims in the middle of beating a man tied up in their basement.

At first, Hannibal nearly thought the two men were engaging in a scene, largely because of the responses of the man in the chair. He paused, watching them, as he took stock of the situation.

"Where the hell is my money, cocksucker?" Andrew growled at the man. He'd clearly been at this for a while, the man was bloody, his left eye swollen shut, and his shirt in tatters from the knife nearby. The rope across his chest, wrists, and ankles was tied tight, surrounded by angry red marks where the man had pulled against it.

The man smiled up at Andrew, wicked and unrepentant. "Last I saw it, I was paying for a whore. You never told me your mother was that skilled."

His head snapped backwards with the force of the answering punch, and he leaned forward enough in the chair to spit blood onto the ground, before cocking a lazy eyebrow at Andrew.

"Come on Andrew, we both know you're nothing. Why would I tell you?" He drawled, thick and southern.

"You fucking stole from me, and you're gonna pay, Graham. I can make it hurt, or I can make it easy, tell me. Where. Is. My. Money." Each word was emphasized with a punch to Graham's chest, iron knuckles glinting on Andrew's hands. He was frightfully rude, and Hannibal would enjoy killing him.

Graham groaned from the onslaught, turning the sound into a breathy moan. Looking up at Andrew, he forced another grin, sharp with pain, and, breathy and sarcastic, moaned "harder, please."

Andrew growled, drawn into a rage by Graham's refusal to take him seriously. He pulled away, going to a nearby workbench to grab a large wrench. Hannibal was amused, watching Graham toy with the man despite his inability to escape. He wondered idly what Graham did, to be interrogated in this basement.

As Andrew returned, Graham looked past the man, eyes catching on Hannibal tucked into a shadow, watching. Hannibal froze, ready to move should Graham alert his captor, but the man's eyes slid past him like he wasn't even there. He had been spotted though, that was certain. Why wouldn't he say anything? Surely a fight between his captor and a new person

would be beneficial to him, so why allow Hannibal to keep watching? Perhaps Graham was enjoying this, or perhaps he thought Hannibal was someone he knew, someone who would help him. Hannibal hasn't yet decided whether or not he would.

Andrew swung the wrench back and forth threateningly, clearly hoping to intimidate Graham.

"Tell me where my fucking money is, or I break your fucking legs."

"Tell me what happens next, Phalkins. I tell you where the money is, you kill me, and then what? You've been found out, asshole. No one will protect you after this, and you know it."

"Because you fucking poisoned them against me! I kill you, and they'll realize everything you said was a lie!" He seemed near hysterical in his rage.

"But I didn't lie, did I? You did think all those things, you did do all of them. Come on," at this, Graham glanced behind Andrew for a scant moment, locking eyes with Hannibal, "do it."

A challenge, laid down by a man about to die. It wasn't the first time a person at Hannibal's mercy had begged, not even the first time he'd been begged with those words, to end someone's misery. He'd never been asked to kill someone else, though, and he found himself oddly charmed by this man's sharp tongue and unending confidence.

He stepped forward, slipping behind Andrew as he raised his wrench, and stabbed his jugular with his scalpel. Messy, but more satisfying then snapping his neck. Andrew dropped the wrench, gripping his neck with one hand as he spun to face Hannibal. The man staggered towards Hannibal, intent to kill etched on his face, before collapsing, dead, to the ground.

Hannibal stepped over the man, eyes on Graham, who was staring at him.

"You ain't one of mine. Thank you for the assist, stranger. Mind untying me?" He had a slight southern accent.

Hannibal remained in place, still examining Graham silently. He was dangerous to leave alive, especially if what he had been saying to Andrew was true. A man who could destroy every relationship one had with a few words was a dangerous man to let free, especially once he had seen Hannibal kill. But he was also one of the most interesting things Hannibal had ever encountered, and the interest made him hesitate to simply kill the man.

Graham seemed to understand something of his hesitation, because he started talking again.

"Hey, we can both walk away from this, stranger. My job ended when I tore this asshole down. I'm more than happy to forget everything about this night, including, if you're so inclined, my lovely rescuer."

Letting him go also rubbed Hannibal wrong, left a sour taste in his mouth. He didn't quite want to kill the man, but never seeing him again would also be a waste.

Graham's eyes danced as he scanned Hannibal's face, trying to discern what he was thinking. Hannibal's mask was firmly in place, showing only placidness, but Graham seemed to see

something anyway, because his posture shifted, relaxing slightly, and he fixed Hannibal with a lazy grin. A mask of his own, it seemed, far more fluid than Hannibal's.

"Or not, handsome. I'm equally open to the idea of becoming… acquainted. Got a few too many broken ribs for the fun stuff, but I'm sure we can find a compromise."

Hannibal frowned.

"I am not accepting sexual favors in exchange for freeing you."

Graham froze for a moment, clearly aware of his misstep, before recovering. He offered another smile, less cocky than the last, slightly more genuine.

"Not a favor. Just an offer, free of charge. No offense meant. Besides, I was serious about the ribs. I move too much, and I think my lung'll get punctured. That said, you don't like the idea of me disappearing. I was just trying to find a compromise." He shifted slightly, flinching when the movement stretched one of his wounds.

Hannibal considered the man, the paths he could take. It was so rare that he would meet someone as interesting as the man in front of him. It would be a waste to kill him before Hannibal could even properly meet him. Decided, he stepped forward, using the now-bloody scalpel to saw through the rope.

Graham fell forward as soon as the rope binding his chest gave way, gasping in pain. The act he'd been putting on, of unaffected arrogance, frayed alongside the ropes holding him up. His hands were cuffed behind his back, pulling against his ribs.

"Key. Pocket. Pants," Graham gasped out, sweat beading on his brow. Hannibal retrieved it, releasing the man, who clutched a hand to his ribs, cradling them. He would not be able to move effectively in his current state.

Hannibal scooped the man into his arms, ignoring his cut off whimper of pain, and carried him up the stairs into the kitchen, seating him on the counter. Graham gave him a shaky grin, letting Hannibal cut his shirt off and examine his wounds without argument.

His arms were heavily bruised, covered in cross crossing bloody lines clearly made by a knife of some sort, his chest had more of the same. His back was also covered in abrasions, looking nearly like it had been skinned, and was embedded with bits of rock. He'd been dragged over the ground, for long enough to take most of the skin off his back, before being tied to that chair. Four of his ribs were broken, at least two more were fractured, and his face was a mess of bruising, split open in places from the punches. Nothing that would kill him so long as he received proper care. It was impressive, given his injuries, that Graham was conscious, let alone making deals with killers. He was truly a marvel.

Hannibal cleaned the open injuries as best he could with the supplies of Andrew's dismal first aid kit, pressing ice into Graham's hand to hold against his eye, for all the good it would do at this point. There was detritus in his back, deep in the skin and nearly obscured by the sticky, drying blood

Graham's muscles were painfully tense as he cleaned the man's back with gentle strokes of a washcloth. He flinched at the first touch of the tweezers to his back, laughing something sharp and brittle.

"Why are you doing this, doc? Not to self sabotage, but this can't be your normal course of action." He didn't look back at Hannibal, keeping his gaze far away from Hannibal's face. Afraid of his answer?

"I find myself interested in you," he paused, catching Graham's title for him, asking, "Doctor?"

Graham ducked his head in a show of embarrassment, still not looking back at him. The back of his neck reddened, and Hannibal suddenly wished to see his face, to see what expression was on it.

"Sorry, force of habit. Seeing's always been easy for me. You got the hands of a surgeon, used a scalpel, assessed my injuries like you knew what you were doing." The latter two were added a second later, like he was making an effort to back up the first.

"What else do you see when you look at me?" He asked, curious. He'd never met anyone who could see through his mask with such ease.

Graham hesitated, finally glancing back at Hannibal. Whatever he saw seemed to reassure him, because he turned on the counter to better face Hannibal.

"You sure? Seeing on accident is different than looking on purpose. Most don't appreciate it much when I do, often as they pay me to do it to others."

Hannibal nodded, intrigued, and Graham looked.

"Doctor, surgeon. Not anymore, but you still got the calluses. Well off, pretentious. One of the most confident people I've ever met, but yours is more grounded than most peoples. Your confident because you know your abilities, not because of pampering or wealth. Your mask is someone rich, eccentric, put together. You've been killing for a while, which combined with the rest of it-" his eyes widened slightly, "you're the Ripper. Huh. Shit."

He kept going, a slight tremor to his voice at first, before smoothing back into his accented speech.

"Uh, you're not gonna get caught, probably ever. You don't feel anything for the people you kill, at least not what most people would feel. They're beneath you, they're pests. But you're interested in me, so I'm either a particularly interesting pest, like I'd imagine most of your acquaintances are, or you think I can be something else. Is it lonely, being so high above everyone else? Did you see me and think, there's someone who can understand? Someone who won't run at the first sight of that monster of yours?"

Oh, he was lovely. He'd already proven himself unique, but this? Hannibal hungered for him, ached to consume, to possess, his beautiful mind. It was an alien feeling, and he embraced it.

“Hannibal Lector, at your service. I believe we could answer your posed questions over dinner?”

They watched each other for a long moment, both aware of the weight of the moment. Graham was Persephone, staring at the pomegranate seeds, and Hannibal could do nothing but offer them.

“Will Graham. Pleased to meet you. I’m starved.” He grinned at Hannibal, flashing all of his teeth. Will. He ran the name over his teeth, preserving the moment in his memory palace.

Andrew’s meat was unlikely to be good by the time he was finished with Will, but that was alright. He’d given Hannibal something far more valuable in the end, and there were always others he could harvest. Will deserved only the best.

End Notes

Will's job is finding and exposing information on people. I'm not sure how clear I made that.

Also, I dislike the title, and may change it in the future if I remember to.

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